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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 000760

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, AF/C, SE WILLIAMSON,
NSC FOR BPITTMAN AND CHUDSON, ADDIS ABABA PASS TO USAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/17/2018

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CD](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: SUDANESE WILLING TO RESTRAIN THEMSELVES, FOLLOW
U.S. ADVICE

REF: A. KHARTOUM 736

[B](#). KHARTOUM 734

[C](#). KHARTOUM 726

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Senior Assistant to President Al-Bashir, Dr. Nafie says that Sudan will not retaliate militarily against Chad for the Chadian-supported JEM rebel attack on Omdurman but will rather seek to isolate JEM and have it be condemned internationally. He admitted that Chadian rebels could use JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim's weakened condition as a reason to attack him in Eastern Chad but understood that attempts to topple Deby would freeze efforts to pursue dialogue with the U.S. Nafie welcomed American engagement on Chad, Darfur and other issues of U.S. interest. End summary.

POLITICAL - NOT MILITARY - ESCALATION

[1](#)2. (C) CDA Fernandez met with Assistant to the President and deputy National Congress Party (NCP) chief Dr. Nafie Ali Nafie on May 18 at party headquarters to discuss the tensions with Chad in the wake of a bold JEM rebel attack on the outskirts of Khartoum (reftels). CDA warned Nafie that an attack by Sudan on Chad will end any hopes of improved relations with the USG. Whatever our feelings about the Deby regime, such an attack would mean that we would be too busy cleaning up the regional mess caused by such an action, including massive dislocation of civilian populations and a humanitarian crisis. Such an attack would also immediately dissipate any lingering sympathy for Sudan as a victim in JEM's attack on Omdurman. If Sudan felt compelled to retaliate, it should be against JEM and the best form of retaliation would be political and not military. We would be watching closely to see if there is any escalation of action against defenseless civilian populations in Darfur and against Darfuris, especially Zaghawa, in the capital area. Sudan could enhance its credibility by showing restraint or dig itself in deeper into the hole created by past actions if it reacted with more repression.

[1](#)3. (C) Nafie said that while there were early calls for immediate military action against Chad, wiser heads have now prevailed. In contrast to Presidential Advisor Ismail's comments last week (reftel b), Sudan realizes it can gain more by being tough politically rather than "by hot pursuit" across the border. "We attempted to stop Khalil Ibrahim from crossing back across the border, but we know he is back in Chad now." Sudan appreciated this "sensible message" from the U.S. and the Sudanese knew that the U.S. had warned Deby about supporting JEM even before this latest outrage took place. Sudan was not going to be reckless and wanted to "escalate politically not militarily" because it has more to

gain and less to lose this way, "not because we are good guys, or because Deby and Khalil don't deserve it." Sudan intended to pursue muRTc+~dQQuld be an uncalculated risk detracting from our political success" and would allow Chad to paint us as aggressors, he added.

KHALIL IS A CHADIAN SATRAP

14. (C) CDA asked about the role of the Sudanese-supported Chadian rebels. The poker-faced Nafie disavowed any support saying that he had just learned from AU mediators of a Chadian rebel buildup around Adre on the Chad-Sudan border with West Darfur state. "The Chadian rebels are tempted to take their chance to hit back at a weakened Khalil," just like he did to them outside Ndjamena in February 2008 to them. "We are not in the mood to protect Deby from his own people," he laughed "but we understand what you are saying and will take your advice."

15. (C) Nafie said that not only was Libyan support for the JEM attack, channeled through Chad, quite evident to the Sudanese. So was French support, which perhaps was intended for the ANT (Chadian National Army), but winds up in the hands of JEM. "It is hard to know where Chad ends and JEM begins", they are so closely intertwined. "Khalil is basically the Governor of Abeche for Deby even though he is a

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Sudanese." The problem continues to be that Idris Deby is not in full control and his brother Doussa plays on his fears that he is not secure without the Zaghawa and so follows an all-Zaghawa agenda. "We know and respect French interests in Chad" and we tell them: "Secure Deby in power so that he doesn't have to depend on this narrow Zaghawa base" which means stoking further war in Darfur.

CHADIAN/JEM CHILD SOLDIERS TO BE RELEASED

16. (C) Asked about arrests in the capital and the disposition of captured rebel fighters, Nafie said that about half of all remaining detainees, arrested in the capital, will be released very soon. Sudan will hand over the captured JEM child soldiers to ICRC. He pointedly reminded CDA that "when Deby won in February, he expelled thousands of people from Ndjamena and no one complained." Sudan is being much more respectful than Deby ever was. CDA noted that there had been uncorroborated reports of summary executions in the streets of Omdurman that have received some press play in the west and Nafie noted "if we executed people, I can assure you we wouldn't do so in the street. We are going the other way and will let some people go that we still have some doubts about."

17. (C) Nafie said that in addition to JEM's attacks, the biggest problem the Sudanese face is the growth of banditry in Darfur. Many of these are rebel groups that have actually signed peace deals with the GOS, such as some of Minni Minawi's forces, those of Ibrahim Madibo and others. "We don't want to be blamed for this and want you, the Americans, and UNAMID, to be able to take care of this, identify, and punish the culprits." He noted that Sudan had increased police patrols to protect WFP convoys from these bandits. CDA corrected Nafie that, as of May 16, the increased police patrols and convoys had not yet occurred. CDA had confirmed this with WP Sudan Director Kenro Oshidari who knew and appreciated that the Sudanese had made this promise and intended to fulfill it "but it had not yet happened, perhaps because of the JEM attack." Nafie asked that CDA follow up with MFA U/S Mutriff Siddiq "because we want to keep our promises to SE Williamson." He said that these bandits were particularly destructive because they loot humanitarian aid and they scare IDPs from considering returning home voluntarily.

WILLING TO DISCUSS CREATIVE IDP SOLUTION

18. (C) Nafie said that the GOS is hearing chatter that Chad (with perhaps the same Libyan/French backing) may be seeking to make the Fur forces of SLM leader Abdulwahid Nur much more operational than they have been in the past. He noted that despite the focus on Darfur over the past two years, there hasn't been much actual fighting with anyone other than JEM and if Abdulwahid gets infusions of vehicles and weapons like JEM's Khalil Ibrahim, there would be even more violence in Darfur. "We want to solve this now, with your help," he added. Nafie welcomed a possible upcoming visit by SE Williamson to solve all outstanding issues and agreed with CDA Fernandez that "something needs to be done about the IDP issue or Sudan will never be able to get out of this mess." He welcomed creative American suggestions on defusing tensions with IDPs and taking tangible steps demonstrating Sudan's commitment to solving this problem that would meet international scrutiny. One idea the GOS is interested in is community policing drawn from the IDP population as a way of combating crime and increasing security.

19. (C) Comment: Often - rightly - described as the hardest of the Sudanese hardliners, Nafie was at his most positive and collegial. He asked for American help three or four times - at the UNSC in sanctioning Khalil, in intervening with Chad, and in fighting banditry in Darfur. As is his wont, Nafie was quite candid that Sudan would punish both Khalil and Idris Deby if it could but has decided it can gain more politically by playing the victim. This makes a virtue out the ability of regime leaders, like Nafie, to transform a military embarrassment like the JEM raid into a political event which strengthens the NCP's hold on power in Khartoum as it basks in some unaccustomed rallying around the flag from across the Sudanese political spectrum. Nafie's comments reinforce our sense that now is the time to press the Sudanese on substantive (as opposed to just procedural) issues of concern to us - on UNAMID deployment, humanitarian access, IDPs, and

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on Abyei - in return for some cosmetic steps on sanctions and diplomatic support against JEM. End comment.
FERNANDEZ